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TWO NOTABLE PUBLIC DOCUMENTS OF GENERAL CASTRO

PRESIDENT OF VENEZUELA

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To the

Hon. Herbert W. Bowen.

IN presenting to you the translation of two of the most notable public documents, produced by our patriot President, I beg to acknowledge the integrity and honesty of your character, when in the attack of "three Powers" against Venezuela, led you to stand by the side of the righteousness, and won for the cause of "Justice," the most enviable laurel in your diplomatical career.

Please accept my warm admiration and sincere esteem.

Respectfully,

Pedro Rafael Rincónes,

Consul General of Venezuela.

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GENERAL CIPRIANO CASTRO,

Constitutional President of Venezuela.

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"Let us have faith that right makes might;
and in that faith let us dare to do our duty."

LINCOLN.

ADDRESS

OF

GENERAL CIPRIANO CASTRO

CONSTITUTIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC

TO THE VENEZUELANS

ON JULY FIFTH, NINETEEN HUNDRED AND THREE

Let us stop and wonder while delivering this patriotic oration on the anniversary of this memorable and solemn day, the birthday of our Venezuelan home, independent and free.

Seen from this distance of time, at a period when austere and forceful civil virtue is so rarely met with, the men who inaugurated and directed the revolutionary movement of 1811 appear indeed of more than ordinary estate.

In contemplating and studying them and their work after this lapse of years, they appear to grow and increase in size and assume clearer outlines, not unlike the projections of the mountains at twilight and as the light of the new day that rises above the line of the horizon.

They all were endowed with the qualities called for by the exigencies of their times.

The ideas of liberty that at this period impregnated the minds of the people, like the generating pollen on wings of revolutions to fructify this globe, germinated in the souls of these men like the seed sown in deep and wide furrows. Creative and resourceful men, who, notwithstanding the adverse surroundings and the reigning prejudices, gallantly entered the arena to battle for freedom, and at once astonished the world by their olympic audacity.

Like God to the ocean, they dared to say to the ever proud, overbearing and incroaching tide of medieval invasion: "Here shall be stayed their proud billows." And stayed they were, because these men built the levees against which the tendencies of historical absolutism vainly dashed their forces. They formed among the people alliances based upon liberty, and in order to make

them strong against all contingencies they cemented them with immense sacrifices in blood and treasure, coupled with the highest efforts of body and mind.

Oh, yes, that work of founding a nation must have been, in most respects, strong and enduring, when in spite of attack from within and without for three quarters of a century, it subsists at this day, although weak and feverish from excessive loss of blood, still always strong in spirit, with noble instincts, generous sentiments, and entirely in accord with its history and destiny.

We have erred so much, so much, that at times the reflective mind is almost persuaded to believe that we might be a people fatally condemned to the most painful experiences and trials on the road to civilization, for even in the very school of our own misfortunes, we learn so very, very slowly the ways of practical and normal living — that is to say, the ideas of orderly, peaceful development under the auspices of liberty.

Our society delivered from the foreign yoke, but irredeemed from its own vices, falls and rises by turns, as if it obstinately refused to change in the least its own character and habits, and could not listen to good counsels and sound advice, unless it were clothed in the glare of conflagrations or in the distant rumblings of threatened catastrophes. But, perhaps, may not the deep impressions created by the recent happenings be sufficient to correct these, the most potent causes of the convulsive instability of its institutions and its governments? Will it at last learn the object lesson, so full of unforeseen disaster, the fruits of pickle quackery, supported by the most unbridled passions? May it please God, that so it be!

This is the day, above all others, on which to make solemn vows to the sacred memory of the noble founders of our Nationality. Let us make at least one, but let it be fervent, sincere and irrevocable.

Let us all promise without partisanship, without mental reservation of any kind of intolerance and hatred, to live from this day, possessed with the constantly growing purpose before us, to mend our ways, or what amounts to the same thing, never again to disembowel our country with words and bayonets, but rather to protect it with our bodies, defend it with our arms, and to make it great and happy by our efforts in the field of labor, which latter is the highest form of patriotism. Now to-day is the time, to-morrow it may be too late!

To again expose ourselves to a crisis such as we have just passed through, would be almost equal to abandon our glorious

banner and that grand patrimony bequeathed to us by Miranda the Martyr, Bolivar the Great, and their noble co-workers in the struggle for our redemption.

Let us proclaim from every rostrum, and continue to send to our people in the furthermost ends of the Republic, words of cheer and encouragement, that they may arise from the terrible trials and sufferings to which they have so long been subjected.

Let us resolve once and a thousand times before the sacred altar of our common country, that we will abandon for once and all the path of error, not as conquered, but as convinced, in order to pursue, without flinching, the road that is pointed out to us by honor and duty, and let us, at last, bury forever those passions that lead to and end only in anarchy.

Thus shall we become strong and respected and be enabled to give force to the outcome of that peace, which to attain has cost us so much, and thus being freed from internal obstacles and danger, we shall be able to direct all our efforts to the end of making of this country the respected and loved home of a worthy, industrious and intelligent people, that for its sturdy virtues will recommend itself to the admiration of the world, and whose moral worth will make up for the deficiencies of its material resources. Venezuela is in evidence before itself and before the world. It is observed and watched in these days of expansion and conquests. The fertility of our soil, the abundance of our natural resources, form incentives for the avaricious tendencies of other nations.

Venezuelans : — The truth must be told, though it may hurt and pain, or rather in order that it causes intense pain, like strong caustic, and thereby brings forth healthful results.

Venezuelans are unfortunately those whom we must charge as being the authors of all our misfortunes, and Venezuelans must be those who shall raise above all the symbol of our national salvation, from our errors and misdeeds.

Under the palladium of this solemn pilgrimage, I, with all her sons, will go to our beloved country, knowing that it, like a loving mother, will forgive even those of her children who have not known how to love and defend her in the days of tribulation. To-day it is just one year since I, with expressions of the most intense patriotism, declared myself as being in the field to stamp out anarchism and to restore constitutional order, and here I am, returned and bringing you that which then I could but promise. There can still be heard the echo of the words with which a year ago I greeted the

dawn of this glorious day, and announced to the country that the requirements of solemn duty and political necessity had again forced the sword into my hands, and had called me with irresistible force to the field of battle, demanding a striking demonstration of the fact that the right is powerful and always will prevail, when it has for standard bearers, men in whom honor is combined with force of character and is backed by strong convictions.

And what I then promised is now fulfilled and completed with evident exactness.

Thus it was that, in a short campaign, success was chained to our chariot of victory in the very hotbed of rebellion, and thus I was enabled, through the heroism of my men and the constancy of fortune, to draw from the very heat of battle the peace necessary for our national existence, the guarantees for our citizenship, to give stability to progress, prestige to our institutions, and thus purified in the crucible of sacrifice and suffering, bring forth those elements that are needed for the political and social restoration of Venezuela.

The impetuous avalanche of human beings and of events was, in hundred days of battling, reduced to an informal mass, stricken with fear and scattered in all directions. The grave foreign complications that overtook us at the time of our internal conflict could not have been foreseen on the day when we marched to battle, but the general results, properly viewed and appreciated, have really exceeded the promises then made, notwithstanding that they were then looked upon as the blatant vaporings of a beaten blusterer, who had bent his footsteps toward inevitable disaster.

These prodigious achievements have not made me vainglorious, nor has the height to which I have been raised by the heroic deeds of the constitutional army in the internal conflict, and the prudence and patriotism of our people in the foreign contest, caused any dizziness to my head. I aspire rather to base my pride upon the good use we may make of these victories, in the work of wise administration, and of the progress in the unification and elevation of our people, and in the battles that we shall have to fight in the field of labor, of civilizations, of the sciences and of the arts. We have for these undertakings the stimulant and first necessity of life, which is that Peace, that will be very shortly officially declared. This peace is not merely the truce following a cruel, bloody struggle, but the definite and logical outcome of a long war ; the end of which will also, grant God, terminate our public calamities and open wide to us the horizon of our national aspirations. This peace is the conscien-

tious desire of all, and, therefore, it should be lasting and fruitful, permitting us to realize unflinchingly the programme of the cause of Liberal restoration.

Fellow Patriots : — Let us, on this glorious day, remember with gratitude those who, although not of our kindred, have addressed to us during our dreadful afflictions, words of cheer, and given us tokens of affection and sympathy, and let us swear by the blood so freely shed to seal the Independence of Colombia on that memorable field, which, as a wonder of the national art, serves us at the same time as canopy and horizon during this act.*

Let us swear to prove ourselves worthy of that glorious sacrifice by constantly practicing those virtues which it served to improve.

(Signed) CIPRIANO CASTRO.

CARACAS, July 5th, 1903.

*He refers to very good pictures of the war of independence that are on the inner ceiling of the Capitol, representing the great battles of Carabobo, Boyacá, Junin and Ayacucho, that were the ends of war with Spain, sealing the independence of the Great Colombia, which comprised Venezuela, Nueva Granada and Ecuador. Also of Perú and Bolivia.

ADDRESS

OF

GENERAL CIPRIANO CASTRO

CONSTITUTIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC

TO THE VENEZUELANS

ON JANUARY FIRST, NINETEEN HUNDRED AND FOUR

Fellow Citizens : — My vows of to-day for your happiness are so fervent that I may hardly succeed in formulating them : My heart is full in this moment only with them, and they could scarcely be translated but in a salutation or prayer to the Deity, who protects the great peoples — the peoples that regenerate and save themselves by sacrifices and self-denial.

Receive and accept these vows as an homage to your nobility, as an innermost offering to the majesty of the Republic, as a testimony of profound gratitude for the immense amount of honors I owe to your confidence.

Fellow Citizens : — The year that begins to-day will be one of the most fruitful and transcendental in the civil history of Venezuelans — it will be as the first triumphal arch of our organized and flourishing democracy.

From the night of grief and trial that has just passed away, the national soul comes forth, radiant and full of experience as an ineffable Eucharist of patriotism. Those dreadful and protracted hours, fatally necessary, perhaps to the chief design of our civilization, will remain marked out with red rings in our republican calendar as a warning in all times to the governments and the parties that there is nothing so disgraceful and so ravenous as the headlong fratricidal rancour, and that in the struggles supported by this rancour, the people gamble or endanger not only their well-being and credit, but even their existence, which for us was the price of great efforts and sublime immolations.

Something untangible, but noble and wise, as the Deity that inflamed the soul of Bolivar, whispers in my ear that we have doubled, perhaps forever, the hateful cape of the domestic tempests. And in fact, it seems impossible, rationally impossible, that a nation, illustrious for its element of blood, renowned for its heroism, great for its virtues and envied for its riches, may relapse still in its turbulent madness of three quarters of a century — madness of tumultuous crowds and mutiny, that in Athens and Rome, as here and everywhere, has never given but fruits of catastrophe — dreadful germination of the greatest misfortunes.

The visible signs of the present situation, valued from a serene and ample point of view, agree together in proving that the country, reacting upon itself with wise and prudent concurrence of opinion, adopts lastly the means of securing a positive liberty, derived from order and tolerance and the desired well-being, by virtue of the fecundation of peace by labor.

It is evident to me, considering the present state of the public opinion, that the peace conquered in four years of bloody fight is not now a truce that the interests in conflict give to each other, but a compact of everlasting alliance between all the great factors of the national democracy, to liquidate at once before History the mournful accounts of common blunders and mistakes, and to open others with the future, in a great book of gradual and intelligent civilization, able to be practically adapted to the native ways and the high ends of social economy.

The factions have not already action of their own, not even peculiar physiognomy. Some subdued, others convinced, all of them are incorporated almost completely with the great restorer Nucleus, to constitute the formidable unit that henceforth will answer before natives and foreigners of the fate of the Republic. That nucleus is the nebulous of a superb condensation of liberal and democratic Venezuela.

Yes, fellow citizens ! we are in full exercise of our reflective faculties. We try strenuously to give unity to the public spirit, so that the common patriotic efforts may have the greatest effectiveness, and this is a conclusive proof of practical wisdom, because unity is the first scientific basis of all associations. We renounce to the old factious conventions to belong to the new vigorous communion which, from the borders of the Tachira to that of the Orinoco, has irrigated in immense furrow the beneficent seed of the restorer ideal ; and this is a testimony of profound good sense, because men

and parties and even the same ideas, are by an evident historical law more or less accidental elements of a given time, and fall willingly or by force, under the vital principle of incessant transformation that rules in all the spheres of the universe.

Immediate product of this laudable concurrence of the country with its primordiate needs, is the great plebiscite of corporations and citizens that has proclaimed from one end to the other of the national territory, the urgent convenience of the constitutional reforms, to correct certain grave anomalies occasioned by the war, and to adjust the fundamental basis of the Union and the organic principles of the public powers, according to what the same institutions have demonstrated in their application.

The inopportune political idealism of our ruling classes has caused the loss in barren trials of a precious time, that we will only make up bringing to the body of the native institutions elements, of comprobated analogy with our character, and organic rules that may fill up with energetic wisdom our lack of sufficient preparation for the free development of the Republic.

I have been present in the impetuous overflow of the reformist currents as anxious spectator, because the duties of the Magistracy prevent my activity in this field, and I would like to have been able to support it freely with all my vigor. Let this confession be pardoned to me, as pledge of genial republican frankness, confession that wrests from me the vehement desire of seeing consecrated in everlasting Codes and laws the principles that nourished my soul in the exile, that furnished me with arms on the 23rd day of May, 1899, and that afterwards have always been my guide and even my shield in all the peripetias of the *Revolution Liberal Restauradora*, with an efficiency visible to all, because this Revolution has conquered all its adversaries, because under its flag our country has been saved of black conspirators, and because in its provident bosom there is only love for the Venezuelan family.

Let it be also well understood that my agreement with the reformist idea is above all those foul dealings which in similar cases have put in danger the internal security of the State.

There is not a single motive to suppose that I am capable of extravagant ambitions, or that I belong to that class of individuals who affect to surrender to certain insinuations of perfidious conventionalism. Even if I had not come in the high position I occupy by the uprightness of my behavior and the strength of my arms, I would never turn my mind to suggestions unfriendly to liberty.

It is enough the power that the people have given to me, and my character of leader of the most beautiful and certainly the most beneficent revolution that the modern annals of Venezuelan record. With this character and this power, I have tried and will go on trying to obtain for my country the greatest amount of benefit, and when the hour to surrender then comes, there will be no man and no party who will be able to say that I served them or they served me as an instrument for something unworthy of the honor of the Republic.

Venezuelans : — After some days you will be in possession of the propitious, constitutional and judicial elements that you ask with such high reasons as a sovereign and progressive entity. Then and until considerable time after, it is probable that we will have no questions nor political problems that will embarrass or preoccupy us ; above all, because when the Association works with guarantees and the Government administrators with honesty and intelligence, there cannot be between the one and the other but sympathetic currents, and this, in my opinion, constitutes a state of things able to satisfy the most pressing aspirations of liberty and expansion — of ample liberation, in short.

Besides, the Liberal Restoration, definitely organized and constituted, will be as a great church, always open to the communion of the modern national spirit by the imminence of the democratic principles in the brilliant eternity of the beloved country. The creed of the citizens in that church will be a permanent protest against the factious pugilism and the reactionary madness, and there will be no Venezuelan that will not swear with noble faith in the altars, eternal love to fraternity and to union.

In this way, free of incandescent passionate political controversies, affirmed the peace in the public conscience, maintained order as a precious necessity to the individual and collective interests, the most fruitful initiative in the sphere of the administration and in the field of business will necessarily come, until our economic level will be raised, and we will have sufficient representation in the markets of the world. This is the *desideratum* of the country in this solemn epoch, undoubtedly because, besides the elemental current reasons that make good its criterion in this particular, its recent history teaches that if some of our good liberal governments would not have withdrawn from the activity of the administration and the improvement of public works to rush into imprudent political adventures, we would have to-day nothing to envy to the most advanced peoples of the Continent.

We are rich and laborious ; two oceans offer us extensive routes to bring and to carry all that we produce and need, and the idle capital in other zones wishes anxiously to come and thrive in our soil. We only want to be sufficiently discreet and judicious to secure confidence — mother of credit — and to exploit our riches with practical and methodical criterion.

If to obtain this you need still some new sacrifice, you can dispose of me and of what I am worth. No greater glory to a man than to have contributed to his country's civilization with all that he received from her and from God, who helps and protects her.

Fellow Citizens : — In the name of the Liberal Restoration and of my loyal forebodings, I augur you that this year will be the first of a series of peaceful lustrums, during which the Republic will raise to great culture and progress.

Caracas, January 1, 1904.

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